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he never had a vote, but now that he is dead, they are giving him one.' ” If this be true, why all the talk about the difficulty of Americanizing the South-European? Then, there is the matter of divorces in high circles. Queen Carmen Sylva, that social reformer, made a rule that no lady who had been divorced *more than twice* should be invited to Court. It is true that we have no court. . . .

LITERATURE AND LIFE. By E. B. Osborn. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company.

As compared with writers of essays and occasional papers on this side of the Atlantic, Mr. Osborn (who is the literary editor of *The London Morning Post*) has more of a knack of raising questions without answering them and of talking about matters merely for the sake of saying occasional good things about them. What he writes is very good talk—amusing if you do not expect too much; and it is not exactly good taste to expect too much or to try to give it.

Thus *King Lear's Chaplet* in Mr. Osborn's book is essentially just some samples of poems written by insane persons *plus* something of the author's agreeable personality. The American reader looks for the point—and doesn't find it. The naïve exaggeration of American humor, the naïve dead earnestness of American interrogation, are not here. Even the whims are not so very whimsical. More in our line is something broadly Scotch, arrantly eccentric or sentimental, emphatically funny, like Mr. Stephen Leacock's inimitable satires, or, in default of this, something manifestly cultured and uplifting, or best of all optimistic after the manner of Dr. Frank Crane.

Mr. Osborn seems sometimes subtle with the subtlety of English wit, and sometimes heavy with what we are pleased to consider the heaviness of English humor. Now and then there is a delicious thing; as, the saying of the English rustic to a she collector of popular ballads: “Some of them be too clumsy-like for girls to hear.” But one is not sorry that the chapter on *The Anatomy of Wit* is rather short: humorous stories given as samples have a way of losing their flavor. “Clotted speech” is an excellent phrase in which to describe colloquial incoherence. But even the American “colyumist” hard pressed to fill his space might hesitate to put down such specimens as “Owlizwatyerdoinere” and “Owbijnessyualhemly”.

The author ranges over a large assortment of subjects—from beer to mermaids; from *The Greatest Poetry* to Vachel Lindsay's *Poems*. He has a rather edifying discourse upon the sin known in mediæval times as *accidie* and in modern England, it appears, as “the hump”. This last is not quite serious or philosophical enough to please us—not mysterious enough, does not interest us sufficiently in our own symptoms. He has his fling at some of the stock subjects, such as *Christmas Presents* and *Wills*, and with a sportsman's zest he writes a detailed description of the game of Knur and Spell which will not lure anyone away from the golf course or the baseball diamond.

On the whole Mr. Osborn's essays are excellent in their own way—the way

of good talk, that is neither "highbrow" nor dull; but they were written for British readers.

DEFINITIONS. By Henry Seidel Canby, Ph.D. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Professor Canby is a writer from whom one expects much, his essays being generally of such a character as to provoke the paradoxical criticism that they are so good that they ought to be better. His humor is so incisive that one would have him always humorous: his originality is so suggestive that one sometimes wishes he were not quite so sensible: his judgment is so sound that one wishes he would enlarge the scope and the thoroughness of his considerations.

The essays in this book, like much of this writer's output, are, however, roughly classifiable into two tolerably distinct groups—the academic and the vital. By academic one does not of course mean stiff, labored or wholly futile. Just what one does mean is perhaps best indicated by a sample. In the last paragraph of his essay on *To-day in American Literature*, Professor Canby writes: "In literature we are still pioneers. I think it may be reserved for us to discover a literature for the new democracy of English-speaking peoples that is coming—a literature for the common people who do not wish to stay common. Like Lincoln's, it will not be vulgar; like Whitman's, never tawdry; like Mark Twain's, not empty of penetrating thought; like Shakespeare's it will be popular. If this should happen, as I believe it may, it would be a just return upon our share of a great inheritance."

Now this is extremely well said. It is quite remarkable, indeed, that anything so nearly inspiring should emerge as the conclusion of an essay upon such a subject as *To-day in American Literature*. Yet the whole theme is almost purely academic, its real interest confined within the narrow circle of literary "questions"—the stock topics of the student. In spite of Professor Canby's art, there is a kind of traditional smugness in the first and last sentences, and one cannot find much profit in a point of view which shifts the emphasis from art to American art, from what is good in American literature to what sort of thing literature must be in order to be both good and American.

By way of contrast one may take nearly the whole of what Professor Canby has written about the younger generation—a considerable and significant section of his book. Nearly all of this is vital. The young realists of the day, he sees, for example are really young romanticists; their literature is an unmeasured expression of protest. "As one considers the excessive naturalism of the young realists and asks just why they find it necessary to be so excessively, so effusively, realistic, the conviction is inborn that they are not realists at all as Hardy, Howells, even James, were realists; they are romanticists of a deep, if not the deepest dye even the heartiest lover of sordid incident among them all." This is a precise description of what has been frequently referred to in these pages as the New Romance. This new naturalism, continues Professor